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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/605,109

09/09/2003

Howard T. Barrett

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EXAMINER

DIMYAN, MAGID Y

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

2825

DATE MAILED: 09/01/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/605,109

Applicant(s)

BARRETT ET AL.

Examiner

Magid Y. Dimyan

Art Unit

2825

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 June 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-27 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☐ Claim(s) 1-19 and 21-27 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) 20 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

This Office Action pertains to the Amendment under 37 C.F.R. §1.111, and to the Remarks, filed 28 June 2006. Claims 1 – 27 remain pending in this Application.

Response to Remarks

1. Applicants' arguments cited in their Remarks, filed 28 June 2006, with respect to the rejections of claims 1 - 3, 5 – 7, 9, 12 – 19, 21, 22 and 24 - 27 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) and claims 4, 8, 10, 11 and 23 under 35 U.S.C 103(a) have been fully considered and are persuasive. Therefore, the Examiner has withdrawn these rejections. However, upon further consideration, new grounds of rejections are made in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,747,471 B1 to Chen et al., and other prior art, as described below.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

3. **Claims 1 – 3, 5 – 7, 9, 12 – 19, 21, 22 and 24 – 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,747,471 B1 to Chen et al. (hereinafter, "Chen").**

4. Pursuant to claim 1, Chen discloses a method for generating kerf (or scribe line) data (see Abstract; col. 1, line 63 – col. 2, line 14) that includes: (a) submitting chip data

Art Unit: 2825

for chip processing (see col. 13, ll. 55 - 65); (b) generating kerf data corresponding to the chip data (see col. 3, ll. 35 - 55); and (c) manipulating the kerf data by use of kerf processing using a same manipulation process as for the chip data (see col. 6, ll. 35 - 58, which cite various devices and circuits, requiring the same manipulation process as for the chip data). Thus, Chen clearly discloses all the claimed limitations.

5. Claims 21 and 27 contain the same limitations found in claim 1, and therefore the same rejections also apply.

6. As for claims 2 and 3, see again col. 13, line 55 – col. 14, line 14 which teach, or at the very least suggest, the claimed limitations pertaining to just-in-time kerf circuit generation substantially immediately prior to mask manufacturing in order to avoid multiple versions of the kerf design.

7. Referring to claims 5 – 7, see (4) and (6) above and col. 6, ll. 35 – 59; col. 13, ll. 55 – 65, which teach the claimed limitations of sharing, accessing mask order information and using the same version of software to manipulate the chip design and kerf data.

8. Regarding claim 9, see Fig. 2; col. 1, line 59 – col. 2, line 14, which show the kerf test structures for wafer testing, as claimed.

9. As to claims 12 and 13, see again col. 3, ll. 35 – 62 and col. 13, ll. 55 - 65, which disclose the claimed limitations pertaining to the generating/manipulating steps occurring concurrently (claim 12) and the kerf/chip design images remaining consistent (claim 13).

Art Unit: 2825

10. Pursuant to claim 14, see (4) – (9) above and col. 3, ll. 25 – 62, which teach, or at the very least suggest, the elements pertaining to including test circuits in the kerf area for archiving, auditing and debugging purposes, as claimed.

11. Regarding claim 15, Chen discloses a method for generating kerf data comprising: (a) executing design manipulation utilities for chip data design manipulation (see Abstract; Fig. 4; col. 6, ll. 35 - 58); (b) creating a kerf design build utilities file by assembling kerf features previously designed and stored in a library of kerf design data as a result of kerf manipulation (see col. 6, ll. 35 – 60); and (c) creating and manipulating kerf design data concurrently with the chip data design manipulation processing by using same parameters in the kerf design data manipulation and chip data manipulation to ensure consistency (see col. 3, ll. 55 – 65, which cite circuits and other structures/memory cells in the kerf region, thus ensuring consistency with the chip data). Chen clearly thus recites all the claimed limitations.

12. As per claims 16 and 17, see again col. 3, ll. 43 – 62; col. 13, line 56 – col. 14, line 14, which teach the claimed limitations pertaining to shrinks, expands and new data levels in the design data (claim 16), and adding nonfunctional shapes as assist features to enhance processing latitude (claim 17).

13. Pursuant to claim 18, see (4) above and Fig. 4; col. 13, line 55 – col. 14, line 1, which teach, or at the very least suggest, the claimed elements pertaining to archiving the modified design data in a design repository (since the circuits and patterns in the kerf regions can be standardized).

Art Unit: 2825

14. As to claim 19, see col. 3, ll. 44 – 55; col. 6, ll. 44 - 58, which teach how pre-designed circuits (e.g., ring oscillators, MOS devices, etc, created and stored in a file) can be used in the kerf design, as claimed.

15. Claim 22 contains the same limitations as in claims 2 and 3, and thus the same rejections apply.

16. Claims 25 and 26 contain the same limitations as in claims 13 and 9, respectively, and therefore the same rejections apply.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

17. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

18. **Claims 4, 10, 11 and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Chen in view of Chiang et al. ("From CIF to Chips", 1989 IEEE Eighth Biennial University/ Government/Industry Symposium Proceedings).**

19. As for claims 4, 10, 11 and 23, Chen teaches the method for generating kerf data by submitting chip data for processing and manipulating the kerf data, as recited above.

But Chen does not specifically disclose the claimed elements of using a graphical user interface (GUI), or communicating by email in order to facilitate debugging and reduce mean time to repair to reduce cycle time for the kerf processing, as claimed.

Chiang et al., on the other hand, discloses a VLSI design platform that includes a GUI interface (see graphical layout editor described on page 156, section entitled

"Background") and also includes means for communicating via email to send error messages to all parties on the mailing list in order to improve debugging and reduce cycle time (see page 158, Figure 3, and section entitled **"The Fabrication Interface Service"**).

It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the teachings of Chen with the teachings of Chiang et al. because using a GUI and email facilities (which are both very well known and commonly used in the art) would enhance, streamline and facilitate the debugging and characterization process cited by Chen.

20. Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Chen in view of Parker et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,330,708 B1).

21. Chen teaches the method for generating kerf data by submitting chip data for processing and manipulating the kerf data, as recited above.

Chen does not teach using load balancing in processing chip design and kerf data.

But Parker et al. cites a method for preparing command files for photomask production, whereas the photomask contains chip design as well as kerf data (see Parker et al, col. 3, ll. 21 – 33), which also includes load balancing (see col. 2, ll. 34 – 48).

Since load balancing will speed up the processing and throughput of the data included in the chip design and in the kerf test circuits, it would therefore be obvious to a

Art Unit: 2825

person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the teachings of Chen with the teachings of Parker et al. to obtain the same claimed invention.

Allowable Subject Matter

22. Claim 20 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: prior art does not teach, or suggest, the claimed method of submitting the kerf design data to validation checks to ensure that the combination of kerf design grid and chip design grid prevents grid snapping at the mask write tool.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Magid Y. Dimyan whose telephone number is (571) 272-1889. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jack Chiang can be reached on (571) 272-7483. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

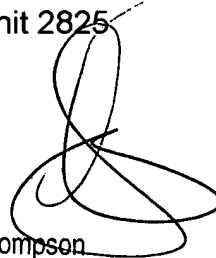
Art Unit: 2825

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

myd
22 August 2006



Magid Y Dimyan
Examiner
Art Unit 2825



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